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ABSTRACT

A history of teacher testing in South Carolina was presented to serve as a context within which the current teacher evaluation system might be interpreted. Legislation in 1940 mandated that renewal of certificates and issuance of new certificates to teachers be predicated upon the applicant's completion of a comprehensive and objective examination. The Common Examinations of the National Teacher Examinations (NTE) became a requirement for certification in 1945. As of 1957, applicants who scored below 332 on the NTE were denied certification. A revised certification procedure became effective in 1969 which required applicants to take the Common Examinations and the NTE Teaching Area Examination appropriate for their field. In 1976 the State Board adopted separate minimum score requirements by teaching field. The General Assembly recently passed the Educator Improvement Act (Act 187, 1979) which created the Educator Improvement Task Force as a separate state agency. This body was responsible for implementing provisions of Act 187. The Task Force was dissolved in 1982 after submission of its "Final Report and Plan for Implementation" to the State Board of Education. Almost all mandates of Act 187 were in effect as of March 1984. (DWH)

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TEACHER CERTIFICATION EXAMINATIONS IN SOUTH CAROLINA 1940 TO 1984

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TEACHER CERTIFICATION EXAMINATIONS IN SOUTH CAROLINA: 1940 TO 1984

South Carolina has utilized written examinations as an integral part of the teacher certification process for nearly four decades. The purpose of this paper is to provide a brief history of teacher testing in South Carolina to serve as a context within which the current teacher evaluation system, enacted in 1979, may be better interpreted and understood.

The South Carolina General Assembly updated the statutes related to teacher certification during the legislative session of 1940. Following the recodification, a committee of five members appointed by the General Assembly to investigate the statutory provisions dealing with the certification of teachers recommended that the renewal of certificates and the issuance of new certificates be predicated upon the applicant's taking a comprehensive and objective examination. The examination was recommended as an addition to any existing requirements concerning college credentials.

The teacher certification process again came under review in 1942, when the State Board of Education appointed a committee to produce a study on proposed revisions in the system. Based on recommendations contained in the Committee's report, which the State Board received in January, 1944, the Common Examinations of the National Teacher Examinations (NTE) were adopted and became a requirement for certification with an effective date of July 1, 1945. From 1945 until 1969, scores on the Common Examinations were used not only as a requirement for certification but also as one factor in determining the salary of a teacher. From 1945 through 1956, candidates were awarded certificates based on their relative standing with respect to test scores of all candidates in the State for the year: A certificates went to the top 25%; B certificates to the middle 50%; C certificates to the next 15%; and D certificates to the bottom 10%. Under this arrangement, no one was denied a

certificate on the basis of scores on the NTE. In 1957, a system of absolute, rather than relative, requirements was instituted.

As a result of the changes in 1957, applicants scoring below 332 on the NTE were denied certification. Changes in the system during the period 1945 to 1957 resulted in situations in which teachers with identical scores on the Common Examinations might hold different grades of certificates and, consequently, have their salaries affected accordingly.

In 1967, the State Superintendent of Education, at the request of the Governor, appointed another committee to study the certification system and the resulting impact on teachers' salaries. The forty members of the committee included representatives of the General Assembly, State Board of Education, State School Boards Association, colleges and universities, Parent-Teacher Associations, South Carolina Education Association, State Department of Education, school superintendents, principals, and teachers. As a result of the committee's efforts, the State Board of Education adopted, in 1969, a revised certification procedure requiring applicants for certification to take both the Common Examinations and the NTE Teaching Area Examination appropriate for their field. Under the revised procedures and regulations, a Professional Certificate was issued on the basis of a composite score of 975 and above and a Warrant was issued to candidates who scored between 850 and 974. Teachers holding graded certificates at that time were given the option of retaining those certificates or qualifying for the new Professional Certificate by meeting the academic requirements and earning a composite score of at least 975 on the NTE.

The revised system operated only four years before a new committee was appointed in January of 1973 to study teacher education and certification requirements. The committee reported to the State Board of Education in June, 1973, and included among its recommendations that the State Board maintain the use of the

NTE as a measure of cognitive knowledge of prospective teachers. The Committee also recommended that provisions for Warrants and graded certificates (A, B, C, D), along with the salary differentials associated with such certificates, be eliminated. The State Board of Education adopted the report of the Committee and attempted for three years, without success, to obtain appropriations to eliminate the salary differentials associated with the Warrants and graded certificates.

Educational Testing Service (ETS) had urged that the state validate the cut-off score of 975 which was adopted in 1969. In 1971, ETS issued guidelines that made clear its position on the need for validating cut-off scores used in certification. South Carolina did not move quickly to validate the score and in 1974 ETS announced its intention to cease the reporting of scores to South Carolina.

In 1975, a three judge court issued an interim decision in the case of United States v. North Carolina, requiring that the state provide objective proof of a rational relationship between the minimum score requirement on the NTE and the state's objective of certifying only minimally competent teachers. Shortly after the interim decision in the North Carolina case, the South Carolina Board of Education authorized ETS to conduct an extensive study for the purpose of examining the validity of the NTE and the appropriateness of the cut-score. As a result of the study which was delivered in January, 1976, the State Board adopted separate minimum score requirements by teaching field. The new score requirements, based on data produced by the ETS study, were higher than the previously used score for all areas of certification except agriculture. The revised certification requirements were adopted by the State Board in June, 1976, with an effective date of November 1, 1976.

On September 15, 1975, shortly after the initiation of the ETS validity study, the United States brought suit against the State of South Carolina, the South Carolina State Board of Education, the South Carolina State Retirement System, the South Carolina Budget and Control Board, and three local school districts in their individual

capacities and as representatives of a defendant class of all local school boards in the State. The plaintiffs charged that the use of minimum score requirements on the NTE for the purposes of certifying and determining the pay levels of teachers within the state violated the Fourteenth Amendment to the Constitution of the United States and Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1974.

On September 17, 1975, the South Carolina Education Association (SCEA), the National Education Association (NEA), and nine individuals as class plaintiffs brought another suit against the same individuals in their official and individual capacities. The second suit was also based upon the Fourteenth Amendment and Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1974, as amended, and, in addition, alleged violations of Sections 1981 and 1983 of Title 42 of the United States Code. The plaintiffs in the second suit were seeking substantially the same relief as that sought by the U.S. Attorney General's suit, and on January 6, 1976, the SCEA, NEA, and nine individuals became plaintiff-intervenors in the action brought by the U.S. Attorney General.

The plaintiffs contended that more blacks than whites historically had failed to achieve the required minimium score on the NTE and that this resulted in a racial classification in violation of the Constitution and the statutory provisions cited in their complaints. Each complaint sought declaratory and injunctive relief with respect to the use of the minimum score requirement in certifying and determining the pay levels of teachers, injunctive relief to upgrade the certification levels of teachers adversely affected by the minimum score requirement, and monetary relief for alleged financial losses of teachers.

On April 12, 1977, a three-judge panel, sitting in the District Court of the United States for the District of South Carolina, ruled in favor of the State of South Carolina and the other defendants. In a 45-page order, the Court ruled that none of the challenged decisions of the defendants were motivated by an intent to discriminate and that the State's use of the NTE for both certification and pay purposes bore a "fair

and substantial relationship to the achievement of an important and constitutionally permissible governmental objective" required by the Fourteenth Amendment. With regard to the charges under Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, the Court ruled that all uses of the NTE in South Carolina satisfied the "business necessity" of Griggs v. Duke Power Company 401 U.S. 424 (1971). Cited throughout the court order in support of the findings were Washington v. Davis, 426 U.S. 229 (1976), and Village of Arlington Heights v. Metropolitan Housing Development Corporation, 45 U.S.L.W. 4073 (U.S. January 11, 1977). The order concluded with this statement:

> In accordance with the foregoing findings and conclusions, we conclude that plaintiff and plaintiff-intervenors have failed to establish their right to any of the relief sought in their respective complaints. It is therefore, ordered that judgment be entered in favor of the defendants.

On June 13, 1977, the U. S. Department of Justice and plaintiff-intervenors filed notice of appeal to the United States Supreme Court. On January 16, 1978, the Supreme Court affirmed the judgment of the District Court.

Although the State was successful in defending its use of the NTE, certain groups and individuals continued their opposition to the use of the examinations. These concerns were reflected in the FY 1979 General Appropriations Act which contained the following proviso:

> Provided, further, that a report will be made to the General Assembly by the Board of Education by February 15, 1979, outlining the long-range impact of continued use of the National Teacher Examinations on the quality and supply of public school teachers in South Carolina. The report shall include consideration of alternatives to the use of the National Teacher Examinations for certification. The presiding officers of the House and Senate shall forthwith appoint four members of the House and four members of the Senate to study such report and make recommendations to the General Assembly by March 15, 1979, for improving the methods of teacher certification. In the event no action is taken by the General Assembly during the 1979 session the composite score used by the Department of Education to determine successful passage of the National Teacher Examinations shall be set at the passing score in effect on July 1, 1975 (975 points).
>
> Provided, further, that the temporary or emergency certificates issued to teachers for the 1977-78 school year shall remain valid for the 1978-79 school year.

In response to the proviso, the State Board of Education authorized the State Superintendent of Education to appoint an advisory committee to include representatives of the following organizations:

1) colleges and universities;

2) school administrators;

3) South Carolina Education Association;

4) Palmetto State Teachers Association;

5) South Carolina Federation of Teachers;

6) South Carolina Congress of Parents and Teachers;

7) South Carolina School Boards Association;

8) South Carolina State Chamber of Commerce;

9) National Association for the Advancement of Colored People;

10) South Carolina General Assembly;

11) State Board of Education; and

12) State Department of Education.

The Advisory Committee submitted its report to the State Board of Education on January 12, 1979. On February 9, 1979, the State Board of Education submitted to the General Assembly a report of the study along with the following recommendations:

1) That the present use of the National Teacher Examinations be maintained but the required scores for certification be set at three standard errors of measurment below the scores recommended by the validity study.

2) That the use of the National Teacher Examinations to determine salaries of teachers be discontinued in connection with graded certificates and Warrants. Sufficient appropriation would be required to eliminate the salary differentials for 2,997 teachers holding Grade B certificates, 335 teachers holding Grade C certificates, and 10 teachers holding Grade D certificates.

3) That the State Board of Education initiate new validity studies as necessary to ensure continued validation of the National Teacher Examinations by professional and legal standards.

4) That the State Board of Education monitor the use of the National Teacher Examinations to develop a body of data upon which to base further activities.

The General Assembly's response to the report was passage of the Educator Improvement Act (1979 Act 187) which included among its provisions the following:

1) the administration of a basic skills examination in reading, mathematics and writing to applicants for admission to teacher education programs;
2) a prohibition on continued use of the Common Examinations of the NTE;
3) development or selection of teaching area examinations for those areas in which area examinations of the NTE were not available;
4) development of an evaluation instrument to be used by colleges and universities to evaluate all student teachers;
5) development of an observational instrument to be used by local school districts in evaluating teachers during the provisional year of teaching; and
6) the identification of criteria and procedures to be applied in the evaluation of all certified personnel other than provisional teachers, whose duties include teaching in the classroom.

The legislation also created the Educator Improvement Task Force as a separate State agency and assigned that body the responsibility for all developmental work associated with items 1-5 above. Responsibility for item 6 was assigned to the State Board of Education. Under the "sunset" provisions of Act 187, the Educator Improvement Task Force was dissolved on June 30, 1982 after submission of its "Final Report and Plan for Implementation" to the State Board of Education.

As of March, 1984, all mandates of Act 187, with the exception of the evaluation of annual and continuing contract teachers, are fully or partially in place. School districts are required to implement the provisions for the evaluation of annual and continuing contract teachers during the 1984-85 school year.

References

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